

# **Irregular Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations: Their Roles and Considerations**

**A Monograph**

**by**

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL William E. Rieper  
US Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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This monograph seeks to determine the ideal tasks and considerations for militias and irregular forces in counterinsurgencies. It specifically addresses groups organized by a legitimate sponsor such as the Host or Partner Nation and excludes criminal organizations that terrorize a government or its population. This paper provides a basic outline of insurgent and counterinsurgent goals and establishes baseline militia tasks and considerations that it tests using three historical conflicts: The Malayan Emergency, The US in the Vietnam War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. While verifying that militias are effective in counterinsurgent operations for security and defense related tasks, providing intelligence, population control, and permit for conventional forces to direct actions against insurgents, this paper reveals that irregulars have the potential for additional contributions with proper supervision and training. The study reveal a doctrinal gap for using irregular forces which it attributes to the effects of the Vietnam War and reaction to criminal militias in OIF, which made US forces resistant to employing irregular forces.				
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## **MONOGRAPH APPROVAL**

Lieutenant Colonel William E. Rieper

### **Irregular Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations: Their Roles and Considerations**

Approved by:

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Robert M. Epstein, Ph.D

Monograph Director

---

Robert Haycock, COL, IN

Monograph Reader

---

Stefan Banach, COL, IN

Director,  
School of Advanced  
Military Studies

---

Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,  
Graduate Degree  
Programs

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## **Abstract**

IRREGULAR FORCES IN COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS: THEIR ROLES AND CONSIDERATIONS by LTC William E. Rieper, US Army, 47 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to determine the ideal practices for militias and irregular forces in counterinsurgency operations. This study specifically addresses those groups organized by a legitimate sponsor such as the Host Nation or one of its partners and takes note to exclude criminal organizations that seek to terrorize the government or its population to gain concessions. As part of its study, this paper provides a basic outline of the goals of insurgent and counterinsurgent doctrine. It uses Mao Tse-tung as a source for universal insurgent goals and Revolutionary Insurgencies and David Galula for Nationalist Insurgencies (Galula refers to them as Bourgeois-Nationalist). Galula's differentiation is unique because it attempts to identify situations and expected insurgents actions for each type of insurgency though insurgencies may include characteristics of both models. This study also refers to US doctrine to provide an understanding of how the US expects to fight insurgencies. This monograph then establishes a baseline of criteria for militia tasks and considerations that it subsequently investigates using historical examples of three conflicts: The Malayan Emergency, The US in the Vietnam War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. As in any military operation, commanders must balance a myriad of criteria that weigh on possible alternative solutions. In the employment of irregular forces, a leader must consider how using locally hired indigenous forces affect operations. He should be aware of how the roles of such unconventional forces affect the militias themselves, how the Host Nation or its defense forces react to them, and possible US government and popular reactions.

While verifying that militias are effective in counterinsurgent operations for basic security and defense related tasks, providing intelligence, population control, and permit for conventional forces to direct actions against the insurgents, this paper revealed that irregulars have the potential for additional contributions. With training and supervision, surrogates can engage in short duration offensive operations. Militias also provide a means for the government to garner local support against the insurgency through inclusion. They can facilitate reconciliation with disaffected groups and provide a unifying force for these groups in politics.

In the course of researching applicable doctrine, there is a noticeable gap in the use of irregular forces in counterinsurgency operations. The author attributes this gap to the residual effects of the Vietnam War and the criminal militia operating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, which made US forces resistant to employing irregular forces.

In the conclusion, the author calls for a revision of current US doctrine to expand the use of irregular forces in Counterinsurgency Operations. This calling is not so much based on the author's own opinion but reflects the reality that since most potential enemies, unable to match the combat power of the US, will continue to use asymmetric methods, including exploiting and operating among the local population. Irregular forces provide a feasible solution to this problem that can provide an advantage in future US operations.

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## Introduction

During Operation Iraqi Freedom’s “Surge” in 2007, observers began noticing the Coalition Forces’ (CF) Sons of Iraq (SOIs). Iraqi civilians hired to maintain traffic checkpoints, the SOIs denied Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and other insurgents unimpeded travel though the countryside. Though the program exceeded Coalition expectations and became instrumental in winning back regions previously under insurgent control, concerns emerged about the SOI’s veracity and intentions. These concerns proved unfounded but exposed a potential gap in US counterinsurgent doctrine concerning the use of irregular forces. This is interesting because the US used irregular militia in nearly every war in its history. Why were the SOIs different and how did this and other events contribute to Coalition hesitancy?

Recent experiences during OIF provide some enlightenment. An insurgency is “an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.”<sup>1</sup> Consider then irregular forces, sometimes referred to as surrogates, militia, and indigenous or unconventional forces, in an insurgency are “armed individuals or groups who are not members of the regular armed forces, police, or other internal security forces.”<sup>2</sup> In this study, they refer to groups supporting the government but they can mean bodies that form an opposition. The latter, such as Jaysh al Mahdi that terrorized sectors of the Iraqi population, negatively influenced Coalition perceptions. Is this responsible for such a turn in US attitudes towards militias? “World powers have historically resorted to utilizing surrogates as an economy of force measure to augment their overstretched militaries ability to police their far flung national interests.”<sup>3</sup> Did US conventional forces lack an understanding of unconventional tactics and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Army, *Army Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2005), 1-1

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3.24 Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2009), GL-7

<sup>3</sup> Stephen F. Howe, *Fighting the Global War on Terror Tolerably*, Thesis (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2007), 2

considerations? Additionally this paper uses the term sponsor to identify the party or parties responsible for providing oversight of the surrogates. In context, this can refer to the Host Nation where the conflict occurred, its defense forces, or one of its allies.

This paper proposes, first, that militias in a counterinsurgency are most effective in operations that are close to the surrogate fighters' homes. Their knowledge of the terrain and the population is ideal for holding ground, providing intelligence and security related tasks to permit conventional forces to conduct other operations. Second, commanders must be aware of the ramifications of using militias considering US and Host Nation (HN) views. If militia members commit criminal acts, the victims, the HN, and the international community may hold the US accountable. Therefore, the US should guarantee to uphold local laws against those guilty of such acts. A genuine surrogate concern is insurgent reprisals, but by operating close to their homes, the surrogates can safeguard their families. Furthermore, there may be a HN government or military bias against the militia leading to attempts by the conventional forces to undermine militia operations through threats, arrests, destruction of militia property, or withholding salary. Third, the surrogates need a viable transition to some other employment post insurgency. The militia, believing they risked their and their families' lives, may feel the government owes compensation for their service. Failure in this respect risks the loss of the militia's respect and loyalty.

This paper investigates the role of militias in counterinsurgency operations by first reviewing insurgent and counterinsurgent doctrine focusing on the importance of population control. Next, it reviews considerations for recruiting and training militias and proposes suitable tasks for surrogates. Accordingly, it uses cases from The Malayan Emergency, The US in the Vietnam War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom to examine the trends and effects of militias in counterinsurgent operations. They include the militia's overall effect on the conflict, the HN government and its conventional forces, and other sponsors. Furthermore, each case study examines efforts to transition the militia forces to a peacetime function when the insurgency ended to determine the validity of this or other concerns.

Numerous worthwhile studies that review irregular warfare capture the events and draw conclusions specific to the time of the insurgency. However, they do not always use several related insurgencies to determine themes applicable to US forces. “While acknowledging that the differences between insurgencies do exist, it is important to recognize that similarities between them may permit particular lessons to be transferred from one case to another. Whether policies are transferable depends, in large part, on the overall situation.”<sup>4</sup> Critical is determining situations similar to those the US expects to face in the future, as it is a reasonable assumption that the US will participate in a counterinsurgency only under certain conditions. Clausewitz remarks that each war has its own unique characteristics, but to be worthwhile, the examples must share some aspects with respect to the parties, tactics and political and economic motivations involved.<sup>5</sup> The examples in this paper reflect three conditions, the author assumes, for conflicts involving the US in the next century. First, there is a trinity of combatants of a smaller HN, a major power (the US) or coalition supporting the HN, and an insurgent group composed of some combination of local and foreign fighters. In each instance, the HN is underdeveloped and dependent on the major power’s assistance. Second, a democracy or democracies fight the insurgents. The HN’s institutions are sometimes weak, but they at least try to establish democratic styles of government. Third, the HN and major power does not condone or participate in gross or institutionalized illegal acts. Crimes are usually isolated and remain the exception, not the norm. Other similarities exist, but with respect to militia operations, they do not provide additional insight for this study.

## **Review of Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Doctrine and Theory**

Whereas the insurgent seeks to divide, undermine, and isolate, the counterinsurgent should consolidate, strike the guerilla’s bases, and establish strongholds to control the most

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<sup>4</sup> Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 200

<sup>5</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, 1984), Clausewitz discusses how each war is unique in Book I

contested areas.<sup>6</sup> Doctrine is vital to provide a framework for understanding, but it remains a point of departure in study and is not a systematic guide for execution as that leads to inflexibility in its application. To establish a framework of understanding for Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Doctrine, this text draws from three sources, the first being Mao Tse-tung. Mao describes insurgency as a protracted and methodological struggle divided into three phases:<sup>7</sup>

1. Guerilla War
2. Mobile War
3. Strategic Offensive<sup>8</sup>

“Different authors have given these different names, but the essential meaning remains the same. It is noteworthy that, in practice, the phases were likely to be less distinct than in theory and could merge into another.”<sup>9</sup> In the first phase, Guerilla War, the insurgents gather strength and lay the seeds for future operations. They form political parties and seek to achieve legitimacy in government simultaneously undermining it at the local level. In isolated base camps “volunteers are trained and indoctrinated, and from here, agitators and propagandists set forth, individually or in groups of two or three to persuade and convince the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside and to enlist their support.”<sup>10</sup> In the second phase, Mobile War, the insurgents execute direct and increasingly frequent actions to weaken or discredit the government. The second phase serves as a bridge between the Guerilla War of Phase One and the Strategic Offensive of the third phase and includes elements of both.<sup>11</sup> The insurgent verifies conditions are right to escalate operations. The militant arm engages in activities to prevent

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<sup>6</sup> Leroy Thompson, *The Counterinsurgency Manual* (London: Greenhill Books, 2002), 95

<sup>7</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000; 1961), 21

<sup>8</sup> John Morgan Dederer, *Making Bricks Without Straw: Nathanael Greene's Southern Campaign and Mao Tse-Tungs Mobile War*, (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1983), 8

<sup>9</sup> Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerillas and Their Opponents since 1750*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 74

<sup>10</sup> (Tse-Tung 2000; 1961), 21

<sup>11</sup> (Dederer 1983), 9

counteractions, channel potential allies, and promote its struggle to the masses.<sup>12</sup> It is imperative to preserve combat power for the third phase where the insurgents organize into regular military formations to destroy the government's armies.<sup>13</sup> According to Mao, this process, especially the first two phases, can take years and requires patience from the insurgents. Insurgents engage an enemy only with assured victory and rely heavily on intelligence, imaginative tactics, distraction, and surprise to retain the initiative.<sup>14</sup> "Most importantly, Mao understood that the aim of military action was to achieve a political goal."<sup>15</sup> Mao's protracted struggle concept dominates the insurgencies in Malaya and Vietnam.

Second, this paper uses the work of David Galula. In *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Galula expands on Mao's theory and classifies it as The Orthodox Pattern, which exists primarily in colonial and semi-colonial territories. The Orthodox Pattern sought a social revolution to alter the existing order.<sup>16</sup> Galula contributes a second model to the study of insurgency, the Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern that occurs in established and independent states that focuses on the act of power changing hands rather than installing a new order. The revolutionary struggle of the second model involves deep-rooted issues that are accepted, or ignored by the ruling class. "The goal of the insurgent is limited to the seizure of power; post-insurgency problems, as secondary preoccupations, are shelved..."<sup>17</sup> Through violence, the Bourgeois-Nationalist insurgent establishes his movement quickly though he does not necessarily feel obligated to initiate a Maoist-type political arm or offer other alternatives to government. Here the insurgent seeks publicity through random terrorism and then isolates the population from the government through terrorist acts aimed specifically at the government and its symbols

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<sup>12</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg FL: Hailer Publishing, 1964), 47

<sup>13</sup> (Tse-Tung 2000; 1961), 57-59

<sup>14</sup> (*Ibid* 2000; 1961), 23

<sup>15</sup> (L. Thompson 2002), 23

<sup>16</sup> (Galula 1964), 43

<sup>17</sup> (*Ibid* 1964), 58

of power.<sup>18</sup> In some respects, the Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern expedites Mao's Orthodox Pattern by using spectacular attacks more than propaganda and other activities to accelerate eroding civilian confidence in the government.<sup>19</sup> Neither model is an absolute as insurgencies may include characteristics of both. The random violence patterns of Iraq's Sunni rejectionists follow the Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern though they differ from their AQI partners who desire to establish a Pan-Islamic Caliphate. Regardless, both methods seek to win over the people by popular influence or coercion.

The third reference for this study is the United States Army's Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Appropriately borrowing from Mao, Galula and other experts, the FM 3-24 improves on US counterinsurgent doctrine. Almost too well received upon its release, the manual's utilitarian, how-to approach and small digestible servings of theory draws some unjust criticisms for its simplicity that ignores its design as tactical and operational level manual. Interestingly, the FM 3-24 barely mentions the use of surrogates and the limited discussions available usually focus on controlling the lawless militias already mentioned.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is arguable that current US counterinsurgent doctrine for its conventional forces neglects the potential for militias. This trend is a recent development of the last few decades and discounts a long history of America successfully employing surrogates.<sup>21</sup> Second, as the Department of Defense expects to fight smaller wars in the near future, they will include operations with and among the local population, which the enemy will fight to control. As it is impossible for the US and its allies to be everywhere, irregular forces offer a viable alternative to protect and isolate the people.

In support of this argument, each of the three sources above state that population control is the key to counterinsurgency. The counterinsurgent cannot squander resources trying to hunt

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<sup>18</sup> (Galula 1964), 58-60

<sup>19</sup> (Ibid 1964), 59

<sup>20</sup> (US Department of the Army 2005), 3-110

<sup>21</sup> James D. Campbell, *Making Riflemen From Mud: Restoring the Army's Culture of Irregular Warfare* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 20-21

down every insurgent. It is far more effective to protect and isolate the population from the insurgent and safeguard it from attacks. “It is easier to separate an insurgency from its resources and let it die than to kill every insurgent.”<sup>22</sup> To be successful the counterinsurgent must be more mobile than or at least as mobile as the insurgent is, have superior leadership, good intelligence, and collaborate with responsible conventional forces.<sup>23</sup> Denied of its power base, the insurgency must resign to failure or directly and prematurely challenge the government, leading to his defeat.

## **On Organizing and Training Surrogates**

“One of the most effective counterinsurgency techniques is to train local civil defence units to supplement anti-guerilla forces.”<sup>24</sup> For recruiting, organizing and, training surrogates, “Paramilitary forces should be drawn from among the inhabitants and trained in counter-insurgency operations such as small unit patrolling, night operations, and the ambush.”<sup>25</sup> A militia comprised of local citizens ensures a connection with the people and further internalizes national counterinsurgent goals. It is noteworthy that if the surrogates are from a minority the government does not favor, the state may seek to subvert it for fear the militia may turn on the government. Militias are most useful in security roles closely tied to their homes to safeguard them against insurgent reprisals. Surrogates are quite effective in neighborhood watch programs, occupying checkpoints or access points to markets or other public activities. Their presence reassures civilians and dissuades insurgent attempts to infiltrate population centers. Their actions drive a wedge between the civilian population and the insurgents denying them the opportunity to coerce the population. Once the insurgents lose support they will either attempt to consolidate and attack thereby making them more vulnerable to detection or risk discovery displacing to another

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<sup>22</sup> (US Department of the Army 2005), 1-23

<sup>23</sup> (L. Thompson 2002), 99

<sup>24</sup> (Ibid 2002), 21

<sup>25</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, (The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 13

location.<sup>26</sup> When discussing militias an Algerian national once argued, “people can’t eradicate the terrorists without the army, and the army can’t eradicate the terrorists without the people.”<sup>27</sup> Success breeds success and as in Iraq, once the local population believes the irregulars can safeguard them, the militia can reach such massive size that it overwhelms the insurgency.<sup>28</sup> A 1969-Rand Study determined that the key components to controlling rural areas where insurgents operate are surveillance, patrolling, defense, reaction, and pursuit. With very little training, militias can perform many if not all of these tasks excluding possibly pursuit, which may require coordination outside the militia’s normal area of operations and into areas it has little knowledge of, otherwise a militia’s intimate knowledge of the terrain and the population are ideally suited to such activities<sup>29</sup>.

The first case study on The Malayan Emergency, describes just such a situation where an insurgency was winning over the people, but active steps by the government, including the use of surrogates blocked insurgent efforts.

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<sup>26</sup> (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006), 1-23

<sup>27</sup> Scott Peterson, "Algeria's Village Vigilantes Unite Against Terror," *Christian Science Monitor* 89, no. 239 (November 1997): 8

<sup>28</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 107-108

<sup>29</sup> F. J. West, Jr., *Area Security* (Washington, DC: Rand Corporation, 1969), 14

## Case Study 1: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960

During The Malayan Emergency, British and colonial forces demonstrated that a conventional army could defeat an insurgent force. The government's success was due to a deliberate and planned counterinsurgent campaign with definite goals. Malaya was a British colony in Southeast Asia where for twelve years the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), controlled by the Maoist influenced Malayan Communist Party (MCP), tried to overthrow government. The movement failed largely because the MCP lacked external logistic support after the British army denied them access to their local sources and it failed to expand beyond its Chinese minority base. However, studies frequently overlook the government use of irregulars.

The colony boasted an inhospitable tropical climate and difficult terrain with rain forests and jungles that covered 80% of the countryside including a tall mountain range that ran north to south through the county's center. These trees were mostly old growth with heights exceeding 100 feet and a canopy that blocked out sunlight and killed most of the undergrowth.<sup>30</sup> Visibility remained limited due to the density of the trees. The jungles were navigable by foot yet provided effective concealment from airborne observation. Protecting the isolated villages, mining towns, and farms scattered throughout the forested countryside from insurgent attacks was daunting for the government.<sup>31</sup> Though this environment seemed to favor the opposition, Galula argued that such conditions more adversely affect insurgents who lack the resources that governments possess.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Malaya rested on a small peninsula approximately 200 miles wide and 400 miles long. The only land route into the country was through a narrow border shared with Thailand.<sup>33</sup> This small land bridge and British control of the coastline restricted the insurgents'

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<sup>30</sup> Vernon Bartlett, *Report From Malaya* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), 30

<sup>31</sup> Edgar O'Ballance, *Malaya : The Communist Insurgent War, 1948-60* (Hamden: Archon, 1966), 36-37

<sup>32</sup> (Galula 1964), 37

<sup>33</sup> Donald Mackay, *The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960: The Domino That Stood* (Washington: Brassey's Limited ), 7

logistics. Additionally, mountains and valleys compartmentalized the country facilitating government containment efforts.<sup>34</sup>

Malayan industry accounted for one-third of the rubber and 35% of the world's tin production, making it the largest producer of both commodities.<sup>35</sup> The importance of rubber and tin was not lost on the local population who understood that any attack against these industries was a threat to their livelihood. In a costly oversight, the Communists failed to understand this relationship.

Demographically, ethnic Malays accounted for nearly half the colony's six million people. Other ethnic groups included Indians, Pakistanis, some Europeans and a small number of people native to the region prior to the Malays arrival. About one third of the population was of Chinese origin, many were nationals who migrated into the colony looking for work on the numerous rubber plantations and tin mines.<sup>36</sup> Malays preferred not to do these jobs, so there was little economic competition between the two groups. However, cultural differences led to a physical separation as most of the Chinese migrant workers settled into segregated squatter villages. Wary colonial authorities usually avoided the Chinese settlements. Though relations between the Chinese workers and native Malayans were often tense, violence was rare.<sup>37</sup> Eventually Chinese Communist insurgents followed the immigrants into colonial Malaya and infiltrated the squatter towns. They formed support cells and connected with the native MCP that had organized in Singapore in the 1920s.<sup>38</sup> Two elements that contribute to an insurgency are sharp linguistic, class or other communal differences in a society and a central authority that is unable or unwilling to maintain control over the entire territory.<sup>39</sup> The Chinese workers living in

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<sup>34</sup> (Galula 1964), 36

<sup>35</sup> (Bartlett 1955), 85, 87

<sup>36</sup> (Beckett 2001), 96

<sup>37</sup> (Bartlett 1955), 23

<sup>38</sup> (Ibid 1955), 33

<sup>39</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *Lessons From the Malayan Struggle Against Communism*, Thesis (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, 1957), 3

segregated camps where the authorities failed to patrol created the complicit environment the insurgents needed, but the onset of World War II forced the MCP to delay its plans

After the Japanese invaded Malaya, the MCP suspended operations and joined an alliance of convenience with other resistance elements to form the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Considered largely ineffective, "the MPAJA avoided Japanese troops and took practically no action against them at all."<sup>40</sup> Regardless, the MCP honed their insurgent techniques against the Japanese and prepared to resume operations after the war.<sup>41</sup> The MCP "realized that the people – particularly the Chinese squatters on which it would depend for logistical support – were the key to the success of their insurgency."<sup>42</sup> With the Japanese surrender, the Communists moved quickly to gain popular support by portraying themselves as the party solely responsible for winning the war. "Within days, MPAJA had taken over effective control of most of the country, setting up Communist-controlled People's Committees"<sup>43</sup> The MCP, now the strongest political entity in the colony, reorganized its military wing into the Malayan Races' Liberation Army (MRLA).<sup>44</sup> The movement faltered under British political pressure and offers of Malayan citizenship to the Chinese for their service in the war finally diffused the crisis but the Communists soon re-established a clandestine army in early 1946. Not deceived by the MCP, the British "possessed substantial information indicating that the Malayan Communist Party was about to embark on a bolder and more aggressive program of action."<sup>45</sup> The Communists seeing their chances of success quickly fading felt compelled to act. "The Malayan Emergency began in the spring of 1948, when the MCP realized that it would not succeed in gaining power by

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<sup>40</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 58

<sup>41</sup> (Bartlett 1955), 34

<sup>42</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005, 2002), 63

<sup>43</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 60

<sup>44</sup> (Pye 1957), 8

<sup>45</sup> (*Ibid* 1957), 7

industrial and economic subversion alone, and decided to resort to active insurgent warfare to turn the country into a Communist state.”<sup>46</sup>

Though the MCP failed, there were early moments when the fate of the conflict was unsure. However, the insurgents could never launch an effective offensive against the government and as the war persisted, it became more difficult for the insurgents to rebuild. Poor decisions also took a toll on the Communists’ efforts. Indicative of the MCP’s inadequate leadership, attempts to sabotage the country’s valued rubber and tin industries backfired and increased the population’s opposition to the insurgency. Government troops gained proficiency at jungle warfare and steadily denied the insurgents access to the Chinese squatter settlements through relocation, curfew, and rationing programs. The MCP desperately approached China for assistance, who despite voicing strong support for the Malayan insurgents, provided only marginal contributions. A main Communist argument for the revolution was for national liberation. The British deprived the Communists this critical element of its propaganda campaign early by promising and eventually granting the colony independence in 1957.<sup>47</sup>

Not receiving its due credit, the surrogate Special Constabularies (SCs), provided an effective barrier for the local population against the insurgents. Initially the British intended the SCs to be an interim force while the government trained regular police and built up the military, but their service became invaluable and they outlasted their original charter.<sup>48</sup> In August 1948, the government granted Police Commissar COL W.M. Gray’s request to hire ten to fifteen thousand SCs. The British deputized private security teams from rubber plantations and tin mines and soon exceeded their original quota as the SC numbers climbed to over 42,000. This stemmed from the government’s practice to contract a business’s entire security force so as not to show favoritism. This may appear wasteful, but it guaranteed that no disgruntled or recently

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<sup>46</sup> (O’Ballance 1966), 14.

<sup>47</sup> James M. Higgins, *Misapplication of the Malayan Counterinsurgency Model to the Strategic Hamlet Program*, (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2001), 22

<sup>48</sup> (Nagl 2005, 2002), 65

unemployed guards drifted over to the insurgency, ensured fair treatment and equal pay of all SCs, and facilitated government oversight of a consolidated surrogate program.<sup>49</sup>

The SCs were mostly native Malays who lived close to their work. The Government, realizing their potential, soon assigned the SCs to guard villages and provide security around local government offices in addition to the rubber plantations and tin mines. The British established a standardized training program for SCs selected to serve in Area Security Units (ASUs) for roving patrols in population centers.<sup>50</sup> These initiatives left the army and police free to conduct offensive operations against the insurgents.<sup>51</sup> The SCs, by guarding their homes, their families' sources of income, and political offices, became active participants in the government's success. The SCs became both a military and political instrument that protected the people and tied them closer to the government.

The British forces commander, LTG Sir Harold Briggs, seeing the SCs effectiveness, included them as part of his well-documented campaign plan also popularly known as the Briggs Plan. The Briggs Plan included early population-centric, counterinsurgent methodologies that Galula and the FM 3-24 subsequently promoted and refined. "The basic rationale of the Briggs Plan was one of exploiting the MCP's logistical vulnerabilities"<sup>52</sup> and to this end "its object was to start a logical clearing of the country south to north, to isolate the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) from the people who supported it and to force the insurgent fighters into the open. It featured close civil administration, police and military co-ordination at all levels, and the resettlement of Chinese squatters living along the edge of the jungle into New (Safe) Villages."<sup>53</sup> Resettling the Chinese squatters enabled the British to channelize MCP supply lines and reduce its mobility.<sup>54</sup> There was a risk of further driving neutral Chinese over to the insurgents as

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<sup>49</sup> (Short 1975), 128

<sup>50</sup> (Bartlett 1955), 81

<sup>51</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 83,107

<sup>52</sup> (Pye 1957), 51

<sup>53</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 106

<sup>54</sup> (Pye 1957), 51

resettlement is one of harshest means of population control, but it worked.<sup>55</sup> Once cleared, the army turned over the territory to civil authorities and continued on to the next village. “General Briggs' plan for re-settling the Chinese squatters and regrouping the rubber-estate and mine labour struck at the very root of the problem. It was a devastating measure that did more than any other single thing to defeat the Communists in Malaya, as it completely divorced the MRLA from the people and caused it to wither away.”<sup>56</sup>

In early 1950, LTG Sir Harold Briggs reported the following on Communist activities:

“They relied for supplies, recruits and information on the Chinese population particularly in squatters' areas but also in the populated areas in both of which they had their cells. These cells remained undetected and unscathed through denial of information. Chinese areas were widespread and close to the numerous objects of attack and most of them were outside the civil administration which suffered through an acute shortage of Chinese speaking officers.”<sup>57</sup>

This changed with the SCs securing key infrastructure in remote population centers throughout the countryside as British and Malay forces began patrolling the jungles in efforts to hunt down the insurgents. In 1951, British Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttleton, showed strong support for the SCs by advocating the government provide additional training to Malayan forces, including irregulars, rather than commit additional British resources.<sup>58</sup> However, the Briggs Plan failed to gain results quickly enough and some British officials grew impatient. The Malayan Emergency hit a low point in late 1951 when the Communists assassinated British High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney. As a result, Police Commissioner Gray and LTG Briggs, who was already suffering from health problems, resigned.<sup>59</sup> The potential existed for the British to change strategies after this incident, but fortunately, this was not the case. Arriving in February 1952, “it was Brigg's replacement, (GEN) Sir Gerald Templer, who truly understood the

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<sup>55</sup> (L. Thompson 2002), 86

<sup>56</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 108

<sup>57</sup> (Short 1975), 235

<sup>58</sup> (Nagl 2005, 2002), 76

<sup>59</sup> (Beckett 2001), 101

importance of winning the hearts and minds of the population and shifted strategy to the classic population-centric counterinsurgency approach that utilized techniques designed to persuade the population to support the government and reject the insurgents.”<sup>60</sup> GEN Templer decided to expand rather than replace LTG Briggs’ plan. Though GEN Templer received much of the credit, many scholars later agreed that LTG Briggs’ strategies had already defeated the insurgents by 1952, and while they remained a concern for eight more years, the Communists never again had the strength to challenge the government<sup>61</sup>. With MRLA operations disrupted, GEN Templar began employing Special Constabulary units in Mobile Jungle Squads to squeeze the MRLA further.<sup>62</sup> GEN Templar’s extension and expansion of the Briggs Plan provided continuity of effort and crippled the Communists.

Interestingly, the first references for the popular government to insurgent force ratio of 10:1 appeared during the Malayan Emergency. That is ten counterinsurgents, including army, police, and irregulars, are required for every insurgent to guarantee success. This became a frequently used quota in subsequent counterinsurgent doctrine as Sir Robert Thompson discussed at length in *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.<sup>63</sup> However, Thompson, who was both, in charge of the British Observer Mission to Vietnam and a contemporary observer to Malaya, later discounted this figure. “One must take into account both the insurgents’ organization and the type of area in which the government has to operate, including problems of terrain”<sup>64</sup> Using population density, Thompson divides the terrain into populated urban areas, rural, and remotely populated areas with the dangers of insurgent threat growing progressively from the most to least populated.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gian P. Gentile, "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army." *Parameters* vol. 39, no. 3 (US Army War College, 2009), 9

<sup>61</sup> (Ibid 2009), 9

<sup>62</sup> (O'Ballance 1966), 124

<sup>63</sup> (R. Thompson 2005),48-49

<sup>64</sup> (Ibid 2005), 104

<sup>65</sup> (R. Thompson 2005),105

While accounts of the Special Constabularies lack the detail of other irregular groups, it is erroneous to disregard their contributions. Even if a majority of the thousands of SCs made no real contribution other than standing a post, they enabled the British and Malays to concentrate on hunting down the MRLA. The militias had a positive morale effect on themselves and the population. They actively sided with the government and risked becoming targets of the insurgency. “This fact was significant in and of itself, reflecting a loyal support in the face of a very real danger which surprised and gratified the country’s European administrators and business interests”<sup>66</sup> The SCs remained dedicated and maintained good relationships within their villages.

Though hired by the Malayan government, the British army controlled the SCs, which met little protest from British government or public. Media of the time documented SC activities, but the accounts lack detail and usually focus on specific actions. There seemed to be little stigma in hiring local surrogates. Notably the success of British units cooperating with the SCs led to the reinstatement of the SAS and Britain published one of the first manuals of any country on counterinsurgent doctrine based on its experiences Malaya.<sup>67</sup> Equally important, the Malayan government was involved in SC recruiting from the outset. The Malayan government’s participation created a shared responsibility with Britain for the SCs but this example has limitations. The SCs were mostly native Malayans and were not isolated or disenfranchised by the government as were some of the other groups in this study.

To its detriment, the Briggs Plan lacked a program to transition for the Special Constabularies to some other employment after the war. Malayan and British authorities briefly considered using former SCs for jungle reforestation projects in regions cleared to establish Safe Villages, but this proposal failed to gain serious consideration.<sup>68</sup> Possibly, most authorities

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<sup>66</sup> Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60*, (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, Inc., 1975), 126

<sup>67</sup> (Beckett 2001), 103

<sup>68</sup> (Short 1975), 176

believed that the SCs would find jobs on their own or this omission is simply indicative of the time and such considerations had yet to emerge.

In summary, the Malayan Emergency was a good though limited model for government use of surrogates. The militias and the government ruling class shared a similar ethnic background that doubtless facilitated assimilation back into society. Transition opportunities were not a priority after the war, and irregular actions did not gain notable attention from the government or the public outside of where they operated. While the MCP continued its struggle for several years, it failed to earn recognition as a legitimate party. The MRLA never had the strength or leadership to organize a conventional army. Through the government's population control program of relocation to safe villages, issuance of identification cards, food rationing, curfew and movement restrictions the insurgents lost the fight for the population. The failure to gain international support sealed the insurgency's fate. The SCs' contributions proved that conventional forces could defeat a Maoist insurgency. In Vietnam, the United States had almost categorically different results.

## **Case Study 2: US and the War in Vietnam, 1950-1972**

As Britain gained ground in Malaya, another Communist insurgency emerged in Indochina. It was a perfect example how state sponsorship (North Vietnam) “for an insurgency can make a movement far more effective, prolong the war, increase the scale and lethality of its struggle, and may even transform a civil conflict into an international war.”<sup>69</sup> The Vietnam War showed how failure to understand the nature of surrogate operations could undermine these programs. Associated with the loss in Vietnam it seems American conventional doctrine shied from irregular operations until OIF. The CIA and Special Forces’ Civil Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), the Marines’ Combined Action Platoons (CAPs), and the US Army’s Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) showed the disappointment and unfulfilled potential of US irregular programs. Often tactically successful, these operations failed because they did not secure the population, promote a longstanding relationship with their sponsors, or defeat the insurgency. There are three possible explanations for their failure. First, the sponsors attempted to expand or accelerate a program beyond its capabilities. Second, a program was too resource or labor intensive to sustain. Third, political-military tensions did not facilitate a long-term irregular forces program. Collectively, they reinforce, sometimes negatively, the primacy for determining the appropriate duties and the ramifications for using surrogates in counterinsurgency operations.

South Vietnam organized two militia type organizations in the early 1960s. The Regional Forces (RFs) companies established a series of security stations to protect critical infrastructure and the Regional Chief usually directed their operations. The District or Village Chief controlled the Popular Forces (PFs) that guarded local hamlets. Some sources used the term Local Forces

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<sup>69</sup> Daniel Bynum, et al., *Trends in Outside Support of Insurgent Movements*, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2001), 5

(LFs) for hamlet security guards, presumably the term was synonymous with PFs.<sup>70</sup> In 1964 the ARVN assumed control of most RF/PFs (Ruff-Puffs) to consolidate security efforts.<sup>71</sup> They operated until the fall of Saigon, but by then the ARVN enlisted them to fight regular NVA units who had little trouble defeating the lightly armed irregulars. The RF/PFs as a force were not a focus of this study, though the US drew from their ranks for the CAPs and the CORDS.

South Vietnam (RVN) unlike the geographically isolated Malaya shared borders with two complicit ineffective states and fought to halt a steady flow of supplies and replacements from the North via Laos and Cambodia.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) provided a lingering conventional threat that prevented the US and RVN from focusing solely on conducting a counterinsurgency. Unlike the Chinese supported MCP, the Communists were from the ethnic Vietnamese majority and boasted able leaders who had the patience required for a Maoist insurgency to succeed. Rain forests and jungles covered the latitudinal running mountain ranges that subdivided the country. While this, as discussed with Malaya, favored the government, the government still faced the near impossible task of protecting villages dispersed in valleys and lowlands while sporadic, often seasonal roads further isolated the scattered hamlets. The southern lowland delta was one of the world's richest rice growing regions, but the fractured and frequently sabotaged transportation system hindered distribution.<sup>73</sup>

The combined population of the two Vietnams was just under 35 million and not especially diverse. The majority were Vietnamese Buddhists while minorities included Chinese and Khmers.<sup>74</sup> In the highlands, lived the Bronze-age indigenous Mountain People or Montagnards as the French called them. Also collectively referred to as Degars or other

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<sup>70</sup> "ARVN Regional Forces TOE," *Orders of Battle* (2009), <http://orbat.com/site/toe/trevithick/TOE%20Guide%20-%20South%20Vietnam.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "South Vietnam: A Net Military Assessment," *Faqs.org* (April 4, 1974), <http://www.faqs.org/cia/docs/53/0000947660/SOUTH-VIETNAM:-A-NET-MILITARY-ASSESSMENT.html> (accessed April 11, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> (Beckett 2001), 193

<sup>73</sup> (Higgins 2001), 27

<sup>74</sup> (*Ibid* 2001), 22

prominent tribal names such as Hmong, Jarai, and Rhade, these groups were mainly of Mon-Khmer or Malayo-Polynesian origin. Pushed out of their coastal homelands by the Vietnamese in the 900s AD, they remained reclusive in their mountain hamlets.<sup>75</sup> Traditional, Protestant-Christian, warlike, and close knit, Hill Tribes had an agrarian diet augmented by hunting, though famine and disease remained constant threats. Some tribes developed complex trade practices, specialized skills such as blacksmiths, artisans, and lawyers, and had complex social customs including progenitorial legal mitigation.<sup>76</sup> Frequently targeted by Communist insurgents, the US discovered it could exploit the Hill Peoples' tribalism in organizing counterinsurgent forces.

When France tried reclaiming its colonies after World War II, The Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, who studied Communist doctrine in the Soviet Union, organized an insurgency using the guerilla tactics learned from fighting Japan.<sup>77</sup> Originally neutral, the US began providing assistance in 1950 after Mao Tse-tung's victory in China and the war in Korea caused the Truman Administration to re-evaluate the growing Communist threat in Asia. Within a few years, over 300 advisors of the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) were in French Indochina. With French withdrawal after Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the US assumed full responsibility to train and advise the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). After the 1954 Geneva Accords partitioned North and South Vietnam, most of the Viet Minh moved to Hanoi and formed the People's Liberation Front (PLF), the political arm of the new Communist insurgency in South Vietnam. Several thousand Viet Minh remained in the South and reorganized as the Viet Cong (VC), the PLF's militant branch. The government of South Vietnam (GVN) was unstable from the beginning and numerous coups eroded national confidence.

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<sup>75</sup> US Department of the Army. *Montagnard Tribal Groups of the Republic of Vietnam*. (Official Department of Defense Report, Fort Bragg: US Army Special Warfare School, US Department of the Army 1965), 2

<sup>76</sup> (*Ibid* 1965), 4

<sup>77</sup> (Krepinevich 1986), 18

Establishing jungle bases to organize, train, and indoctrinate recruits; the Viet Cong soon infiltrated villages to garner support, coercively if needed. When firmly entrenched in the rural countryside, the Viet Cong launched a new Orthodox insurgency, attacking local government offices while the PLF continued to undermine the GVN. US leadership, slow to identify the nature and extent of the insurgency, disastrously encouraged the overmatched ARVN to use conventional tactics. Finally, in 1960 the US acknowledged it needed to revise ARVN training against the growing Viet Cong threat.<sup>78</sup>

Upon taking office, the Kennedy administration sought new options for the war. NSA advisor and counterinsurgency expert Walt W. Rostow emphasized, “The need of the indigenous government to obtain the support and control of the population, (and) that the best way to defeat an insurgency was to nip it in the bud... before it had the opportunity to develop into its guerrilla warfare stage.”<sup>79</sup> In late 1961, the president established the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) to supervise the growing ARVN Advise and Assist Programs.<sup>80</sup> As the ARVN increased size, US advisors were soon directly engaging the VC as other US organizations began forming irregular forces in rural villages and hamlets.

### **Civil Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG)**

To support VC operations, the North funneled men and equipment across the RVN border with Laos and Cambodia. The Degars, the same Hill People once maligned by Maoist and the GVN alike, saw their homeland become a battleground. US Special Forces and the CIA, exploiting the same tight tribal bonds that isolated the Degars from the rest of the country, organized the Highland Tribes into Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs).<sup>81</sup> Lightly armed, but resolute, “the CIDG group’s primary mission was surveillance, scouting, patrol, and local

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<sup>78</sup> (Krepinevich 1986), 26

<sup>79</sup> (Ibid 1986), 33

<sup>80</sup> (Ibid 1986), 64

<sup>81</sup> (Ibid 1986), 70

security...Their behavior varied (from outright cowardice) to stalwart bravery,” but remained generally positive.<sup>82</sup> “The CIA considered the program a rousing success, and for good reason: by the end of 1962, the CIDG political action program had recovered and secured several hundred villages, some three hundred thousand civilians, and several hundred square miles of territory from the VC, utilizing some thirty eight thousand armed civilian irregulars.”<sup>83</sup>

Though the CIDGs established a pattern of success for US surrogates in Vietnam, they witnessed another precedent of resistance from senior American leadership against such organizations. Infighting began when the CIA, encouraged by the program’s success, requested additional military support to expand the operation. With the Special Forces lacking sufficient personnel to meet this request, military leaders made justification to withdraw SF sponsorship for the CIDGs and placed them directly under MACV control. It rapidly expanded the CIDGs in order to use them in offensive operations, violating the program’s intended design as a local security force. In the subsequent shuffle, the ARVN SF, though unsuited to the task, assumed responsibility for many CIDG units and the program soon fell into disarray. Other changes soon fractured the program. Adding to already mounting problems, the Army transferred other CIDGs away from their villages, breaking the vital connection with local inhabitants. The CIDGs, when under US Special Forces advisors, invariably operated within their traditional homelands. The irregulars lost the advantage of popular support and could no longer protect their families. Suffering from poor and frequently contemptuous ARVN supervisors who sometimes even stripped them of their weapons, militia morale crumbled. Ensuing modifications rolled some CIDGs into the Strategic Hamlet Program, a flawed copy of Britain’s Malayan relocation strategy and returned them to American SF control.<sup>84</sup> Further changes moved the irregulars to static bases along the borders to interdict supplies flowing from the North. While these operations were better suited to the CIDGs’ unconventional roots, the remote outposts still displaced them from their

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<sup>82</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *After Tet* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 167

<sup>83</sup> (Krepinevich 1986), 70

<sup>84</sup> (Higgins, 2001), 77

traditional homes causing many CIDG cadre to move with their families.<sup>85</sup> A humiliating defeat at Kham Duc in 1968, where many CIDGs broke ranks and fled, further turned the opinion of US leadership against them.<sup>86</sup> CIDGs endured until almost 1970, but by the mid 1960's they had lost much of their effectiveness and new programs began replacing them.

The CIDGs started promisingly with their strengths being a partnership with government forces and local operations that permitted the militias to protect their families. Primary tasks were security, population control, and preventing insurgent use of local trails. Only later, under poor supervision, when the CIDGs attempted search and destroy offensive operations did the program falter. This shifting focus of surrogate operations failed to appreciate the links between the militias, the land and the people, degraded effectiveness, and destroyed the trust between conventional and irregular forces.

The US did not consider transition or protection of the Hill Tribes when it cancelled the CIDGs. After the war, the US resettled several thousand Degars to North Carolina while Communists executed many of the remaining prominent leaders. “Thousands of Degars fled to Cambodia after the liberation/fall of Saigon, fearing that the new government would launch reprisals against them because they had aided the U.S. Army. However, in Cambodia, they soon suffered much brutal treatment under the Khmer Rouge...The Vietnamese government has steadily displaced thousands of villagers from Vietnam's central highlands, to use the fertile land for coffee plantations.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Combined Action Platoons (CAPS)**

During the final stages of the CIDG program, the US Marine Corps explored surrogate options of its own. Senior Marine leaders disagreed with the MAACV's emphasis of massive

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<sup>85</sup> (Krepinevich 1986), 75

<sup>86</sup> (Spector 1993), 175

<sup>87</sup> Aman Gupta, *Human Rights Of Indigenous Peoples, Volume 1* (Adarsh Nagar, Delhi: Isha Books, 2005), 26

firepower in favor of securing villages and hamlets. After much discussion, the Marines received approval to establish irregular forces in their Tactical Area of Responsibility (TOAR) and initiated the Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) program.<sup>88</sup> “The program was nourished by the Marines’ historical traditions and strategic orientation,” and experiences using irregular forces during operations in Central America from 1915-1935.<sup>89</sup> The CAPs partnered a specially trained , all-volunteer 14 man Marine rifle squad commanded by an experienced Non-Commissioned Officer with a Vietnamese 34 person militia platoon from the RF/PFs. After several field tests, the program officially started in August 1965 when Marines from six platoons collaborated with local RF/PFs in the Phu Bai region. VC attacks fell immediately and encouraged the Marines to expand the program until it reached its peak in 1970. By that time, the CAPs included 114 platoons with about 2,200 Marines, operated in five provinces in I Corps TAOR, and secured over 800 hamlets and 500,000 civilians.<sup>90</sup>

Like the CIDGs, contemporary observers attributed its success to the enduring relationships formed between the RF/PF and its Marine rifle squad. Additionally, the CAPs training regimen benefitted both the Vietnamese and the Americans. A Marine squad partnered with an RF/PF formed a team that intentionally stayed together for 6-13 months, sufficient time for trust and cohesion to form.<sup>91</sup> Between operations, they trained the irregulars on basic soldier skills, small arms proficiency, first aid, and radio procedures. The RF/PFs in turn, familiarized the Americans with the local terrain and specific nuances of local villages. A criticism of the program was that US forces implemented CAPs only in areas with relatively little insurgent activity. This may be true, but this argument cannot deny that the program sustained security and fostered a mutually beneficial relationship between conventional forces and the local population.

Furthermore, it served as a political tool to encourage popular support of the government.

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<sup>88</sup> Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons: The US Marines’ Other War in Vietnam* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 22

<sup>89</sup> (*Ibid* 1989), 23

<sup>90</sup> Keith F. Kopets, "The Combined Action Program" (*Small Wars Journal*, 2005), 2

<sup>91</sup> (Johnson 2008), 18

Unfortunately, it was difficult for the Marines to sustain the steep force requirements for the CAPs and the practice of assigning experienced NCOs took the most qualified leaders away from other units conducting conventional operations that also needed their skills. US escalation continued through the end of the decade and the Marines, like the Army, depended increasingly on draftees. The shortage of qualified personnel eventually forced many units to assign them to CAPs. The draftee's inexperience decreased the CAPS effectiveness.<sup>92</sup> Marine commitment to the CAPs declined starting in 1970 in conjunction with its overall troop reductions in the war. MAACV required the Marines maintain forces for both conventional and CAPs operations though many ARVN field commanders protested the CAPs reductions<sup>93</sup> New commands and organization restructuring further weakened the CAPs and led to such facsimiles as the Combined Unit Pacification Program (CUPP) essentially a poor man's CAPs. Lacking the CAPs special training and subject to change at the parent unit's whim, the CUPP was never equal to the CAPs. The final CAPs deactivated in May 1971.<sup>94</sup>

The CAPs were a successful marriage of Marine and Irregular forces that accounted for more enemy killed and equipment captured than their non-CAPs counterparts operating in nearby regions. They also suffered barely half the casualties but had only a small fraction of the recorded desertions of other RF/PFs. Marines, on the other hand had higher wound (including multiple times) killed in action rates than non-CAPs Marines but their morale, and the CAPs, remained high.<sup>95</sup> Effective in the field at securing villages, providing intelligence, patrols, and ambushes, the Marines wisely refrained from using the CAPs in conventional missions or making them something they were not. The CAPs stayed local and connected to the population. Their shortcoming was their demand for experienced personnel. Too heavy to sustain, amidst other personnel requirements and never fully accepted by MAACV the CAPs collapsed. That the CAPs

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<sup>92</sup> (M. E. Peterson 1989), 73

<sup>93</sup> (Ibid 1989), 77

<sup>94</sup> (Ibid 1989), 82

<sup>95</sup> (M. E. Peterson 1989), 88

did not achieve an operational or strategic victory against the VC was negligible. The CAPs did not need to destroy the VC, only to deny them access to the population. The Insurgents learned to avoid confrontation and decided to outlast the enemy and return later. Greater success may have been possible if the CAPs had lasted longer to face the VC when they did reassert themselves.

Like the CIDGs, there was no transition plan for CAPs. Presumably, they returned to their hamlets. As the Vietnamization turned over responsibility to the ARVN, many of the relationships between the surrogates and the Marines disintegrated. During the war, VC insurgents sought to identify RFs/PFs in the CAPs and attempt retribution. As the CAPs remained tied to the population, the VC could rarely infiltrate the villages where they operated. Interestingly, when the North finally won the war, the Communists took little action against the RF/PFs unlike the CIDGs who they hunted and persecuted. CAPs hamlets were mostly undisturbed and villagers did not experience the retrIBUTions that many of the ARVN leaders suffered.

### **Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)**

While the CAPs declined, MACV decided to develop an all-inclusive program that controlled all existing Civil-Military Operations under a centralized initiative.<sup>96</sup> It was the closest that the US came to a consolidated effort to win the “hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people.” Similar to the CAPs, Leaders believed success relied on execution by skilled junior officers and Non-Commissioned Officers that worked among the people. “US efforts to assist Local Forces and Popular Forces (presumably RF/PFs) took a noticeable upswing in 1964 when Provincial Advisory Teams (PATs) allocated slots for LF/PF advisors (one captain, who also worked civil affairs issues and one lieutenant) on the staff. Finding sufficient numbers of qualified personnel to

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<sup>96</sup> (Spector 1993), 282

fill these slots for the 44 PSAs remained a problem.”<sup>97</sup> Like the CAPs, these requirements became the programs Achilles Heel, even for the PSAs, which “were only staff positions designed to monitor operations. It took a directive from MACV commander, GEN Westmoreland and a vigorous revision of the current advisory programs before the military began to officially work directly with local forces.”<sup>98</sup>

The military’s troubled record with “with local forces received a boost in 1967 with the inception of the Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) Program. A key component of this program included the creation of 354 Military Advisory Teams (MATs) to assist the training and development of LF/PFs.”<sup>99</sup> Still personnel shortages haunted the program, as leaders understood that the demands and dangers of operating in small isolated groups required more than just training. The Army carefully screened prospective advisors to ensure they possessed the necessary skills and attitude. Again, like the CAPS, the program competed with field units for the most talented and experienced junior leaders to accommodate the MATs’ mission to advise and instruct LF/PFs on numerous tactical and administrative tasks. The MATs also “provided a liaison capability with nearby US military forces.”<sup>100</sup> The program showed another weakness in II Corps Area of Operations (AO) in Binh Dinh Province. Binh Dinh province was not a heavily contested area and the CORDS easily caught many VC operatives and sympathizers. Literally picking up the slack, this led to a statistically inflate image of success that was difficult to sustain when the insurgents retaliated. Going fast and thin, making early gains without following through, Boylan criticizes the program for causing some of its own problems.<sup>101</sup> The CORDS, “which were supposed to act as the mainspring of the pacification effort, failed to do so because their morale (fell) by the decision to cut (back) their security groups

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<sup>97</sup> Robert D. Ramsey, *Advising indigenous forces : American advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 33

<sup>98</sup> (Ibid 2006), 34

<sup>99</sup> (Ibid 2006), 30

<sup>100</sup> (Ibid 2006), 36

<sup>101</sup> Kevin M. Boylan, "The Red Queen's Race: Operation Washington Green and Pacification in Binh Dinh Province, 1969-70" *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 4 (October 2009): 1195-1230, 1227

at the very moment when they were thrust into enemy dominated territory.”<sup>102</sup> RF/PFs deserted, hid, or did not venture outside the village. It is plausible that the CORDS were not always successful at internalizing the RF/PFs with the government’s goals, but declining civilian support of the government maybe partly responsible. It is possible the US tried too hard to capture success as the MATS in Binh Dinh reported, “U.S. support inhibited rather than enhanced self-sufficiency.”<sup>103</sup> Local militias became dependent on American assistance and were reluctant to perform independent operations. Overall security decreased in the province as the NVA supported VC targeted local government and RF/PF leadership.<sup>104</sup>

In 1969, Nixon Administration began reducing the CORDS program and by October of 1970, the military assigned fewer than 80 captains to MATs. By the end of the next year, fewer than 66 MATs were operating in South Vietnam. In retrospect, it is clear that the MATs could never be a lasting effective organization. Personnel requirements were too great to make the CORDS practical. Its fate and that of its RF/PF participants was similar to the CAPs. Both sides returned to their parent units, there was no transition plan, and despite a promising beginning, it was impossible to achieve the CORDS grand ambitions in Vietnam. The people lacked faith in the government and understood that the US would eventually exit, leaving them at the mercy of the Communists.<sup>105</sup>

Success for all three programs hinged on US support. When the US worked and served next to the local tribesmen, they fought well, but alone, their dedication faltered. Hardly disloyal or unreliable, the Montagnards felt US forces waver and feared abandonment. Krepinevich is accurate in arguing that irregular forces were not a US priority. “Whenever the Army had to choose between priorities-whether it was manpower and training for the Ruff-Puffs versus the ARVN...or unconventional operations in

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<sup>102</sup> (Boylan 2009), 1208

<sup>103</sup> (*Ibid* 2009), 1212

<sup>104</sup> (*Ibid* 2009), 1226

<sup>105</sup> (Spector 1993), 293

support of counterinsurgency operations versus in support of conventional operations-it unstintingly devoted a disproportionate amount of its resources to those activities that conformed most closely to its preferred method of waging war.”<sup>106</sup> Robert Komar, Deputy Command for US MACV for CORDS, echoed this when he noted in 1969, that U.S. programs...for the struggle for the countryside... were underfunded, uncoordinated, ill-conceived, and often mutually competing.”<sup>107</sup> Along with the previously mentioned possible reasons for failure that included too rapid an expansion, exorbitant work force requirements and US infighting was a lack of a consistent policy across commands. America leadership was impatient, and expected spectacular if not unrealistic results.

The Irregulars were most effective in defensive or security roles. Like Malaya, they excelled in guarding villages and key infrastructure and providing intelligence on local activities in their region. Capt. John Mullen, the Civil Affairs Officer for the same unit that initiated the CAPs program in Vietnam “realized that militia troops, living in their own district, could be organized for effective defense of villages.”<sup>108</sup> Because the militia drew from the local population, they had a connection and sense of responsibility to the region and they could protect their families. The surrogate system broke down when the irregulars worked independently, when they moved away from their homes and families, or when they conducted conventional or offensive operations.

As a whole, the American public seemed neutral to favorable when they took interest. Most news reports portrayed the highland tribes as courageous and regularly praised their dedication and aspiration for freedom from oppression. Montagnard and other surrogate operations were generally under-reported and drew little reaction, bad or good from the public.

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<sup>106</sup> (Krepinevich 1986), 234

<sup>107</sup> (Spector 1993), 280

<sup>108</sup> (M. E. Peterson 1989), 23

The treatment of the US media and public was actually preferable compared to the Montagnards' own government. Though the GVN desperately needed the Montagnard militias, it continued to distrust them. The Vietnamese government was more receptive of the CAPs and the CORDs. They drew personnel from established government sponsored militias and therefore guaranteed support. It is interesting to note that while certain minority groups were more effective, the militia endorsed by or of the same ethnic group as the ruling majority enjoyed the most government support.

Of the three programs, the CIDGs had the most damaging effect on its participants. The CORDS and CAPs alumni could melt back into the population, but the Degars were easily identifiable. The victorious Communists pursued and executed Degar irregulars and exterminated or displaced entire villages. Neither the US nor the RVN initiated transition programs for the surrogates. As in Malaya, it is likely that authorities assumed the surrogates returned to their farms or former jobs when the programs concluded.

The surrogates in Vietnam proved to be an effective economy of force measure when they operated closely with conventional forces.<sup>109</sup> The problem was the US' lack of a central strategy leading to uneven and disparate approaches. Despite success in the field, strategic level leaders never fully embraced the use of militias. The Vietnam War experiences carried over into the peacetime army and led to a resurgent study of doctrine. However, it is possible that because of the shortcomings of the CORDs and post war tragedy of the Hill Tribes, the military failed to update guidelines for militias in counterinsurgencies. This may have hindered serious study and left a doctrinal gap US forces would revisit a generation later.

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<sup>109</sup> (Boylan 2009), 1229

## **Case Study 3: The Sons of Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom**

Almost thirty years after the last American forces returned from Vietnam, the US began fighting a new insurgency. It started in 2003 shortly after the fall of the Saddam Hussein government and as Jeffery Record notes, was different from either Vietnam or Malaya. The US clearly dominated the fight more so than the other conflicts, Iraq was an urban, decentralized struggle that preferred random acts of terror unlike the rural and organized Maoists in Malaya who were deliberate with terror as ethnicity and geography bound the insurgency more than ever before.<sup>110</sup> The latter point refers more to Vietnam than Malaya, but overall, Iraq's insurgency was more akin to Galula's Bourgeois-Nationalist Insurgency<sup>111</sup>. It does contrast with Galula because the Iraq insurgency's only objectives apparently were to oust the US backed Coalition Forces (CF) and reject the new government rather than incite a domestic revolution. The insurgency included Saddam nationalists, AQI terrorists, and foreign fighters who 'answered the call of Jihad,' but the groups frequently had competing agendas.<sup>112</sup> This disunity confounded the CF as intelligence struggled to gain a clear understanding of the enemy.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, with cells working independently and choosing when and where to attack, the insurgents held the upper hand until CF remembered that winning the population was more important than killing insurgents.<sup>114</sup> The focus on population control was more damaging to the insurgents than CF efforts to hunt them down.

Compared to Vietnam, US counterinsurgent operations in Iraq were successful, but not without problems. Echoing 1960 Vietnam, the US was reluctant to acknowledge an insurgency

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<sup>110</sup> Jeffery Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Work*, (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009), 68-69

<sup>111</sup> (Galula 1964), 47

<sup>112</sup> (Record 2009), 68

<sup>113</sup> National Security Council. *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, Policy Statement, (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 2005), 6

<sup>114</sup> (Record 2009), 75

even existed until the bombing of the Al Askariya Mosque in 2006.<sup>115</sup> The US preferred to fight conventionally and deemphasized counterinsurgent doctrine while subordinating it under Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and Peacekeeping Operations. Because the US did not adequately revise its counterinsurgent doctrine, it had to relearn the basics of security, population control, and legitimacy.

Iraq's barren and open terrain, in contrast from the Vietnamese or Malayan jungle-covered mountains included desert in the west, mountains to the north, flatlands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and semi-arid plains in the south. A few major highways channelized traffic between the larger population centers. Iraq's oil reserves, conservatively estimated at 350 billion barrels, were the third largest in the world.

In 2004, Iraq's population of approximately 30 million was predominantly Muslim with a small Christian minority. Ethnic groups included the Arab majority, a large Kurdish minority in the North and several smaller minority groups. The largest religious groups were Moslem Shi'a and Sunni with the latter including the Kurds. This created a three-way political division of Iraqi Shi'a, Iraqi Sunni, and Kurdish Sunni. Shi'a dominated the post-Saddam government and they tightened their hold after many Sunnis boycotted the 2005 elections.<sup>116</sup>

The insurgency started shortly after the US, under UN mandate, led a multi-national coalition into Iraq in March 2003, when the Saddam regime refused international demands to open its ambiguous weapons of mass destruction program to international inspection. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) capitalized on Sunni fears and mounting sectarian violence to attack CF who responded with "The Surge." Iraq was AQI's battleground against the US Coalition and though it needed popular support, it saw the Iraqis as a tool in their greater struggle. When necessary, AQI and its local supporters intimidated other Sunnis with threats and violence.<sup>117</sup> As the insurgency

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<sup>115</sup> Ron Zeidel, "A Harsh Readjustment: The Sunnis and the Political Process in Contemporary Iraq" (*Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 2008), 42

<sup>116</sup> (*Ibid* 2008), 42

<sup>117</sup> (National Security Council 2005), 7

intensified, AQI increased its violent intimidation, sometimes murdering tribal leaders and their relatives. AQI's increasingly oppressive coercive tactics alienated Iraqis who rose to challenge AQI's authority in the Al Anbar cities of Tal Afar, Ameriyah and Ramadi.

Forced Saddam resettlement programs placed a sizable Sunni Ba'athist population in Tal Afar that divided the once Turkoman dominated city.<sup>118</sup> Primarily former military and long influenced by Wahhabi and Takfiri extremism, the core Ba'athists were capable and politically motivated insurgents who genuinely feared the new Shi'a dominated government.<sup>119</sup> The veterans supported AQI and foreign fighters arriving from Syria who would "occupy many of the former (Shi'a) households to gain control of key routes and ground, which they would exploit for future actions."<sup>120</sup> Combat operations to defeat the insurgents, Civil-Military Operations (CMO) to rebuild services, and training the new Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were CF efforts.<sup>121</sup> AQI turned the tide against itself as Sunnis in Al Anbar realized AQI violence and murder were worse than cooperating with the CF.

The city of Ameriyah also populated with Saddam regime veterans, was another battleground. Sunni Nationalist Insurgent Groups like the 1920s Revolution Brigade and the Islamic Army of Iraq allied with radical Al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters.<sup>122</sup> CF first began repairing destroyed civil services to gain respect with the population, then conferred with local leaders to clear the city in March 2006. The insurgents waited until these operations were complete then responded with snipers, raids, and IED attacks. They targeted the population, killing locals when necessary to intimidate them from helping CF. These tactics along with AQI's radical Islamic interpretations repulsed the Muslim, though modern and western oriented Ameriyans. In late

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<sup>118</sup> Capt. Travis Patriquin, US Army. "Using Occam's Razor to Connect the Dots: The Ba'ath Party and the Insurgency in Tal Afar" (*Military Review*, August 2008), 29.

<sup>119</sup> (Zeidel 2008), 40

<sup>120</sup> (Patriquin 2008), 34

<sup>121</sup> Col. Sean M. MacFarland, US Army, interview by Steven Clay. *Interview With Colonel Sean M. MacFarland* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, (January 17, 2008).

<sup>122</sup> Linda Robinson, Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq, (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 218

May, the Ameriyans, sparked by the kidnapping of two locals, struck back. In the ensuing Battle of Ameriyah, US forces came to the locals' aid and fostered a partnership that cleared AQI from the city. The irregulars provided security, helped clear the roads of IEDs and provided intelligence on AQI activities. To cement the new relationship, CFs hired them as a local militia who later named themselves "the Knights Between the Two Rivers."<sup>123</sup>

In the fall of 2006, similar events in Ramadi turned the fight in favor of CF. Weeks of negotiations with local tribal leaders exploited a growing schism between the population and the AQI sponsored foreign fighters. Cooperation between the CF, ISF and tribal leadership was tenuous at first:

"At the same time, area tribal sheiks had no great love for U.S. forces or the Iraqi Army. Early in the insurgency, they had directly and indirectly supported former-regime nationalist insurgents against U.S. forces, and as a result, they had temporarily established an alliance of convenience with AQIZ. Many tribal members were killed or captured combating coalition forces, which diminished the sheiks' ability to provide income for their tribes. These conditions in turn enabled AQIZ to recruit from those families in need of money...Nevertheless, the tribal leaders were still fed up with Al Qaeda's violence."<sup>124</sup>

The situation came to a head with AQI's assassination of respected sheik of the Abu Ali Jassim tribe. Sunni leaders contacted CF commanders to assist in the fight against AQI.<sup>125</sup> Under CF supervision, the tribes "established neighborhood watches that involved deputizing screened members of internal tribal militias as 'Provincial Auxiliary Iraqi Police.'"<sup>126</sup> Once CF showed their support for the tribes and proved they would not abandon them, the Sunni "Sahawa" or Awakening took hold and spread quickly. "Whenever a tribe flipped and joined the Awakening, all the attacks on Coalition forces would stop in that area and all the caches of ammunition would

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<sup>123</sup> (Robinson 2008), 242

<sup>124</sup> Maj. Neil Smith, US Army, and Col. Sean Macfarland, US Army, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point" (*Military Review*, August 2008), 71

<sup>125</sup> (MacFarland 2008)

<sup>126</sup> (Smith and Macfarland August 2008) 67

come up out of the ground... Whenever there was an attack on (CF) the sheik would basically take responsibility for it and find out who was responsible.”<sup>127</sup> Other tribes followed Al Anbar’s lead. The Awakening spread eastward toward Baghdad. The insurgency south of Baghdad, in the polity known as Mahmoudiyah Qaada was nearly equal to Al Anbar. It was a fierce Sunni enclave and a prime recruiting area for the former Republican Guard. De-Ba’athification and disbandment of the IA left most of the Sunni workforce unemployed.<sup>128</sup> Embittered against CF and the new Government of Iraq (GOI), they too were ripe for AQI who valued the region as a pathway into Baghdad. For over three years, the insurgents inflicted heavy losses on CF and the ISF but harsh AQI practices against the population again caused the Sunnis to rebel.<sup>129</sup> After the Awakening reached Mahmoudiyah, CF losses virtually ceased. Capitalizing on the turn of events, CF coordinated with local sheiks and deputized males who allowed vetting and submitted biometric data into an automated database.<sup>130</sup>

These surrogate programs became so successful that they experienced some apprehension from CF and outright suspicion from GOI. In late 2007, CF consolidated these and other groups under the Sons of Iraq (SOI) as part of its program to encourage reconciliation between the Shi'a dominated government and the Sunnis. Sometimes criticized by CF and Iraqi alike (ISF were offended as they considered themselves the real heroes who stood up to AQI). Eventually, CF employed over 110,000 SOIs. AQI was finished after losing Al Anbar and the vital route into Baghdad. With violence down to its lowest level in 5 years in some areas, CFs focused on training and joint operations with the ISF as GOI recruited more IA soldiers and Iraqi Police (IP).

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<sup>127</sup> (MacFarland 2008)

<sup>128</sup> (Zeidel 2008), 45

<sup>129</sup> Farook Ahmed, Backgrounder #28: Multi-National Division-Center's Operations during the 2007-2008 Troop Surge, Analysis (Institute for the Study of War, 2008), 31

<sup>130</sup> For much of the account of Mahmoudiyah the author used his personal observations or discussions with other Coalition members while serving in that region from 2007-08 as the Assistant Brigade Operations Officer for Reconciliation Operations for the third Brigade Combat Team, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault). 3-101 BCT assumed control of the area from 2-10 BCT and witnessed the effects of the SOIs shortly after their inception during the Relief In Place operations at the end of 2-10 BCT’s tour. The scope of the author’s duties provided the opportunity to see CF handling of SOI programs from the company up to the Corps level.

As for Mahmoudiyah, by the end of 2008, CF turned nearly the entire region over to the ISF. Part of putting ISF in the lead meant the GOI had to assume responsibility for the numerous SOI programs. CF consolidated the more than one hundred small SOI groups based on tribal and village lines along IA boundaries. CF standardized pay scales, payment procedures and ordered a complete review all SOI rosters before the transfer took effect.

Because of regional and tribal rivalries and lingering Shi'a fears that Sunnis were using the SOIs as cover to foment insurgency, CF limited SOI operations to the vicinity of their native villages. SOIs were the ideal instrument to separate the locals for the insurgents. They prevented the insurgents from moving freely through their tribal areas with networks of traffic control points, by controlling access to public gathering areas and markets, and by providing information on insurgent activity in their region to CF and the ISF. SOI leaders, who were invariably sheiks or other respected tribal leaders, became more approachable. CFs used the new relationships to leverage further cooperation from the Sunnis. To reduce GOI concerns of SOI revolt, CF limited the types of weapons the SOIs could possess to small arms such as AK-47s. Though CF directed the SOIs to register their weapons with GOI in accordance with HN laws, the easy availability of weapons made this matter hard to enforce. CF provided concrete barriers and other material to reinforce traffic control points, and implemented dress codes to facilitate identification, CF did not issue the SOIs arms or ammunition, which had to provide their own but CF sometimes allowed the SOIs to keep that which they confiscated from insurgents. CF forbade the SOIs from possessing crew served weapons, explosives, sniper rifles, and handguns. To reduce GOI concerns of SOI rebellion, CF required all SOIs to obey Iraqi laws to include curfews when not on duty, weapons registration, and respect for the rights of others. To ensure accountability and prevent AQI infiltration, CF issued all SOIs photo identification cards and took computerized biometric data that included fingerprints, retina scans and electronic maps of facial features.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> (Robinson 2008), 311

The SOI Program altered the course of the insurgency. It finished driving the wedge between the insurgents and the population that began when Al Qaeda's increasingly violent tactics to compel cooperation disenchanted Iraqi Sunnis. Al Qaeda, in effect, did more to isolate itself from the Sunnis than the Coalition had been able to. Second, the SOIs permitted increased cooperation with Coalition Forces and later, the ISF. Third, the SOIs "secured neighborhoods and infrastructure in order to free up Coalition and (IPs)." <sup>132</sup> This was especially true in areas around south Baghdad where GOI had yet to establish IP stations and the "the Coalition had to rely heavily on its SOI groups."<sup>133</sup> Fourth, the SOIs, and the Awakening that fostered the Sunni turning from Al Qaeda, encouraged further reconciliation and increased participation in the government.<sup>134</sup>

GOI did not react warmly to the SOIs for mainly sectarian reasons. The Shi'a dominated government remained suspicious of the Sunni surrogates. Only after heated discussions between senior CF and GOI leaders did the SOIs receive any consideration, though the program still had to overcome a sectarian prejudice that permeated the bureaucracy.<sup>135</sup>

The most glaring weakness in the program was its failure to develop a coherent plan to transition SOIs after they had secured the environment. This was especially true since Iraqi culture highly regarded the warrior role model and the SOI wage of \$300 a month was greater than any salary the SOIs could earn elsewhere. CF did explore many possibilities, including interim projects similar to Civil Service Corps and job training that were short lived. What the SOIs wanted was inclusion in the ISF, which GOI resisted. Several thousand SOIs eventually earned slots in the IP training program, but inclusion in government and opportunities beyond the SOIs remained limited.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> (Ahmed 2008), 21

<sup>133</sup> (*Ibid* 2008), 16

<sup>134</sup> (Robinson 2008), 252

<sup>135</sup> (Ahmed 2008), 260

<sup>136</sup> (Robinson 2008), 320

Ultimately, the SOIs were beneficial to the Coalition. Casualty rates plummeted, Al Qaeda operations ceased to be effective, and the Coalition could focus on building the government. The SOIs functioned as auxiliary police forces and operated several thousand checkpoints, provided intelligence on AQI operations, and turned in weapons caches.<sup>137</sup> Generally, the SOIs denied insurgents freedom of movement, limited access to the local population (their base of support) and prevented insurgents from emplacing IEDs along the roads. Their level of success though was unusual. Like the flipping of a switch, areas long considered insurgent strongholds sprouted groups of hundreds of SOIs.

Naturally, there were problems. The SOI Groups often drew their numbers from a single tribe, a matter of necessity as Coalition Forces employed local citizens and used the existing tribal hierarchy to maintain order in the SOI ranks. Some smaller tribes thought this showed favoritism. It inadvertently created what some interpreted as tribal militia working under Coalition Forces control. Critics were concerned that the SOIs would use their newfound status to enact revenge against other tribes for previous grievances. US forces were concerned that insurgents would infiltrate SOI ranks, or that the SOIs were insurgents themselves and orchestrating a spectacular surprise attack on Coalition Forces. Despite claims to the contrary, higher-level headquarters did not fully integrate SOIs as part of maneuver operations. While always controlled by troops in the field, SOIs programs usually fell under the management of Civil-Military Operations, Information Operations, or specially created staff positions that could affect how much staff planning included surrogate operations.

OIF was the first conflict where American controlled militia received significant media attention. Reporting peaked in 2008 with almost daily stories that focused on SOI valor and efforts to gain legitimacy. These stories though invariably positive have remarkably similar themes and content when examined collectively and probably reflect efforts by CF to influence, though not deceptively, media reporting.

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<sup>137</sup> (Ahmed 2008), 11

Unique from Vietnam or Malaya, SOIs started at the lowest level, sometimes by the Iraqis themselves. Later higher echelon involvement to codify the programs often added complex layers of control. This extends from the aforementioned apparent neglect of irregular forces in counterinsurgent doctrine. Not part of “the plan,” the military beyond the tactical level had problems “coming to grips” with the SOIs. The Vietnam War experience, the fact that many of the irregulars were probably associated with the insurgency in some form prior to the SOIs and the actions of criminal militias negatively influenced US perception. Criticisms of the program seem to support this argument. “Observers decried it as a program of ‘guns for hire’ and doubted that the Sunni fighters were permanently giving up the armed struggle against the government. They believed (GEN) Petraeus was merely organizing the next stage of the Shi'a-Sunni civil war,...the U.S. military was empowering rogue militias that would sooner or later attack the government and lead to an ever more balkanized Iraq.”<sup>138</sup> There were, of course, isolated vigilante incidents among the SOIs and other illegalities, but these were relatively insignificant compared to the security gains provided by the more than 100,000 Iraqis who eventually joined the program. It is amusing that CF saw the potential for GOI to oppose the Sunni SOIs and tried to disassociate it from the Sahawa movement. CF experimented with several names for its irregulars, including Iraqi Provincial Volunteers, Concerned Local Citizens, or simply Concerned Citizens before finally settling on the Sons of Iraq.

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<sup>138</sup> (Robinson 2008), 253

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of irregular forces in counterinsurgency operations. It established a basis for understanding insurgent and counterinsurgent doctrine based upon the works of two credible persons within the field, Mao Tse-tung as translated by Samuel Griffith and David Galula. It also used the US Army's Field Manual 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* to explain how the United States expected units to fight insurgencies. Furthermore, this paper examined considerations for conventional units to organize and employ militias as a counterinsurgent force and proposed some ideal tasks for which irregulars are best suited. It tested these theories against three recent conflicts, two involving the United States and one with Great Britain. As conflicts are inherently different from each other based upon the context and the actors involved, it was difficult to draw general conclusions, however, to remain substantial this paper constructed criteria to select conflicts that were indicative of those the United States might face in the near future. Each of these studies examined the considerations for using irregulars, evaluated their effectiveness on the tasks performed, and what were the effects the militias had in the conflict. That last component was a subjective evaluation of social and political value and not an objective measurement of the local forces ability to perform their tasks. These criteria remained important because these militias were more than just a military force, they were a technique to control and provide inclusion of the population, which were paramount in counterinsurgency operations. When comparing the three cases, occasionally no appreciable trend developed which the author lent to the conflicts being too divergent or inadequate evidence available to support an accurate conclusion. Much of this divergence the author attributed to the relationships between the militias, their sponsors, or the Host Government, which was a trend in itself. The more positive the relationship, especially between the unconventional forces and the HN, the better the militias performed which led to them performing operations that were more difficult. The cases support most of this thesis' proposals for ideal tasks and many of the considerations.

It was no coincidence that the Malayan Emergency provided some of the best examples of irregular forces in counterinsurgency. Though it was arguable that Malaya had the most predictable outcome and that the government forces were reasonably sure of success early, it was irrelevant for the purpose of this study. The important matters were the actions of Great Britain and later, the Malayan government. The British acted early to enroll the already existing native security guards working in the tin mines and plantations, codified their roles and ensured equity of treatment to reduce chances of division and jealousy exploitable by the insurgents. The British coordinated their actions with the colonial government and established training programs that led to a gradual expansion of the militia's role from basic security. As they became more proficient, the SCs formed specialized groups for roving patrols and offensive operations hunting and tracking the insurgents. The irregulars grew beyond an instrument of population control to participating in actions directly against the insurgents. Initially the militias worked near their homes, but eventually ventured beyond the vicinity of their families' villages. Success was due to the government's positive control, mutual respect between conventional and irregular forces, and an easily understandable concept that emerged early in the Briggs Plan that subsequent commanders expanded upon.

The Malayan Emergency was unique from Vietnam or Iraq worth noting. First, unlike Vietnam or Iraq, the British Government established early its intent to grant independence to Malaya. While the citizens of Iraq understood that eventually the US would depart, there lacked a clear timetable and the government had legitimacy issues to overcome as some perceived it as instrument of an occupying force. Vietnam's instability threatened its legitimacy starting with the Diem government and never recovered. MCP insurgents were almost exclusively ethnic Chinese, which limited their ability to assimilate into and move among the population.

The United States in Vietnam presents an entirely different case. The characteristics of Malaya included centralized planning, respect, and cooperation, but such traits were not consistent in Vietnam. The CIDGs were the first and in some respects, the purest example of US

utilization of irregular forces. Effective when supported by their Special Forces and CIA sponsors, they were less so operating independently and worse when later modifications effectively ended the relationship of mutual respect and broke the bonds of the people with their lands and families. Still, the Hill People were competent in a variety of roles when properly supported to include patrols, securing the border, and raids. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese government never fully accepted the CIDGs and the resulting tension created further problems. The Hill People were also an excellent example of what can occur when there is a lack of protection or transition mechanisms as the governments of Communist Vietnam and Cambodia persecuted or killed many of the survivors. This extreme example was unique to the Degars, as South Vietnam lost the war, though lack of such treatment to the CAPs and CORDS programs that this was not a trend. It seemed that when a sponsor used a distinctly identifiable group as the source of its militia, that group had a likelihood of facing negative repercussions; much like the Sunni based SOIs in Iraq. The CAPS enjoyed much of the success of the CIDGs and greater acceptance by the South Vietnamese Government, primarily because the local security forces comprised much of the ranks of the irregulars. The cooperation and interdependence between the Marines and the RF/PFs created a strong bond built on the strengths of the two sides. The RF/PFs also had a training program that increased their proficiency. The weakness of the program, like the CORDS was that it required too much conventional oversight to be cost effective, and near the end of its tenure, modifications and a lessening of standards factored in its eventual demise. The CORDS was a final effort by US forces to organize the United States many Civil-Military Operations under a single program, including the training and direction of local forces. Sharing many of the strengths and weaknesses of the CAPS, the program was too manpower intensive to maintain during Vietnamization. Irregulars in both these programs fared better than the CIDGs as the Communists largely left them alone after the war. Combined the CORDS, CAPs, and the CIDGs showed the US lacked centralized planning and execution of militias in Counterinsurgency Operations.

The three groups, whose nonconcurring lifecycles extended across most of the United States' involvement in the war, experienced different levels of intensity. The CIDGs, who operated from their remote villages in the hotly contested mountains, saw some of the hardest fighting of any of the irregulars in this study. Boylan criticizes some of the conclusions of the CORDS program, as he proved that often the sponsors established these platoons in regions that did not experience as significant insurgent activity.<sup>139</sup> This led to questioning the military effectiveness of militias and paralleled the SOIs whose CF imposed restrictions limited their function. Finally, the US hindered much of the potential for the success of the CORDS as it felt the pressures of Vietnamization and tried to rush a fast and lean initiative that provided too little value for its investment at such a late stage in the war.<sup>140</sup> It followed that irregular forces take some time to develop into an effective force. The SCs were active early in Malaya, but it was not until 1952, that the government made appreciable advances. Still patience and consistency paid off.

Operation Iraqi Freedom had anomalies as well. The Awakening movement leading to the rise of the Sons of Iraq was bottom driven. Its emergence owed as much to the harsh tactics of Al Qaeda to control the Sunnis as it did to the US forces that tried to organize the militias. Indeed, the Awakening caused several near simultaneous events across western Iraq where the Sunnis approached the Coalition for assistance almost as much as the other way around. Two deliberate actions inhibited the SOIs from becoming a more effective counterinsurgent force. First, the Government of Iraq, dominated by Shi'a, remained skeptical of the veracity of the SOIs and resisted attempts at legitimization and endorsement. Since many of the Sunni tribes were originally supportive of Al Qaeda and violent extremist nationalist groups, the government felt justified in its reservations. Second CF refused to provide the SOIs any training or encouragement to raise them beyond anything more than a guard force. Regardless, the SOIs played a significant

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<sup>139</sup> (Boylan 2009), 1226-1227

<sup>140</sup> (Ibid 2009) 1227

role in securing Iraq and provided a legitimate avenue of reconciliation between the government and the provincial tribes. Transition was a significant challenge, as economic hardship after the war left the SOIs with very little alternatives for employment. Literally, the SOIs had nothing else to do except be SOIs. The SOIs program showed that the United States remained resistant to applying militias in counterinsurgency. These gaps and the lack to address them favor the argument that American doctrine currently lacks consistency in using irregular forces.

The SOIs, unique as a locally fostered movement is in some respects a true “counter-insurgency.” Its rise in response to AQI included much of the same aspects of secrecy, development from a small core, and an apparatus for political action as seen in most insurgencies. This perspective led the SOIs to develop and interact with CF and the ISF differently than the irregulars of the other two case studies. After a period of organization and establishing a base, the SOIs expanded at a lightning pace. Its development as a locally driven movement meant that tactical leaders had the best grasp of the situation and had to balance controlling the militias while guaranteeing support from their chain of command. Robinson related in detail some of these experiences and later recounted how the senior CF leaders negotiated with the GOI to ensure the SOI’s survival. It was also notable that since the SOIs were in response to AQI, they also grew from a necessity to answer external pressures that threatened the tribal structure of local Sunni Iraqis.<sup>141</sup> Already disenfranchised in some respects by the national government, the Sunni population responded the only way it could by using the insurgent’s tactics against them.

Interestingly, response from the governments of Great Britain and the United States was mostly neutral to positive on reporting militia activities in all three examples. It followed that if handled correctly, that militias had the potential positively shape public and political opinion. It was hard to argue against themes of local indigenous populations that stood next to conventional sponsors in armed conflict.

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<sup>141</sup> (Robinson 2008). Robinson’s accounts of the SOIs in Al Anbar and the actions pursued by CF to lend them legitimacy in the face of the GOI comprise significant sections of the latter half of her writing.

While this paper sought to identify some commonalities of irregular force operations in counterinsurgencies, examination of the case studies reasserted the specific qualities of individual conflicts Clausewitz first identified that defy categorization.<sup>142</sup> Even when trying to isolate a single tactic or method, the context of the conflict, its environment, and the reasons behind it cause it to evolve in a complex and often-unpredictable manner. The SCs, a part of the native majority worked well with the HN and their sponsors, but the SOIs became another source of dissonance between the US and the GOI. The CIDGs, similarly a distinct group like the SOIs, also experienced different treatment between their sponsors and the HN. CAPs and CORDS had both HN and sponsor support, at least locally, but despite success, their movements never endured though they seemed to be the right force and for the CAPs at the right time. This is problematic in the development of doctrine. Doctrine, like theory, “must be sufficiently flexible and open to take account of imponderables, and it must hold the potential for further development.”<sup>143</sup> Though doctrine is never a systematic blueprint, it must provide general guidelines to promote understanding. Not a panacea that can possibly encompass all possible avenues, doctrine should show illuminate a general route and include explanations of notable exceptions. The strength in doctrine lies in the ability of the force to understand the reasoning behind its tenants and use creative thought in its application and not as a crutch to limp through war. In consideration of this position, this monograph provided confirmation of some of its basic premises.

This study confirmed that when conventional forces incorporate militias they worked best in defensive and security oriented tasks, at least initially. If sponsor provided training, as shown in Malaya and with the CIDGs in Vietnam, and maintained appropriate oversight, militias were effective in short duration offensive operations. In each conflict, the irregulars were an excellent source of intelligence especially the invaluable Human Intelligence on insurgent activities in and

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<sup>142</sup> (Clausewitz 1976, 1984) See Book I again

<sup>143</sup> Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. by Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 194

around their homes. Whenever possible, sponsors needed to include the HN forces to foster cooperation and inspire a sense of responsibility with the government. Failure to do so caused suspicion and hindered future cooperation with the host government and its security forces such as that experienced by the Hill Tribes of the CIDGs or the SOIs in Iraq.

The CIDGs, the SOIs and to a lesser extent the CAPs and CORDS showed that irregulars were always at risk from insurgent reprisals and therefore should be used near their traditional homelands to provide reassurance that their families are protected and that they remained connected to population for security, support, and intelligence purposes. The SOIs also showed that militias could provide a source of unity and a possible voice in government. Sponsors should note that militias could falter if left unsupported and conventional forces should closely monitor their activities to ensure compliance.

Transition seems to be a recent though increasingly important consideration for irregulars. Transition required HN involvement and US commanders needed to avoid the temptation of forcing employment generating or training programs that were costly and squandered resources especially if the local economy was undeveloped or not ready to support these initiatives. It was difficult for commanders to consider HN government or military reaction. Since using the militia automatically insinuated that the government or the military was incapable of providing security, they reacted negatively. Malaya with the CORDS and CAPs in Vietnam were more successful because they had HN involvement and included forces raised by the government.

While part of America's Special Forces mission is to organize and conduct operations with militias, Vietnam and Iraq showed they are not large enough to support such programs on a national scale and the responsibility inevitably falls to conventional forces. US doctrine does not provide an adequate frame for this. The FM 3-24 and its joint operational counterpart, Joint Pub (JP) 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* barely mention friendly militias. In another example, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) recently published Department of the Army

Pamphlet (DA PAM) 525-3-1 The Army Operating Concept, that outlined expectations of possible future conflicts, and it was equally silent on using or organizing irregular forces. The military is at a point where it needs to consider amending its doctrine in light of realities in the field as a recent study concluded the need for “revisions for counterinsurgency operations, stability operations...and training for full spectrum operations.”<sup>144</sup> Potential opponents are not likely to directly confront American forces as they lack the combat power that the US can concentrate on the battlefield. This will force the enemy to seek asymmetric tactics to nullify this advantage and the local population provides a viable means to that end. Therefore, he will continue to seek to control and operate among the population. The US needs to be able to discern the insurgents from the population and surrogates provide a viable tool to provide the intelligence and forces necessary.

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<sup>144</sup> US Department of the Army. *TF 120 Comprehensive Lessons Learned, 1st Edition.*, Fort Monroe: (Army Capabilities and Integration Center, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2009), 3

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